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NON EXPLOSIVE TRAINING ROUND FOUND OFF INSTALLATION

Non-Explosive Training Round Found Off Installation (October 21, 2004)

FORT INDIANTOWN GAP (Oct. 21)—Military officials at Fort Indiantown Gap, recently, learned that a 25-pound, non-explosive cast iron training round from an A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft landed off the installation.

On Oct. 18, the Pennsylvania Game Commission notified Gap officials that they had received an e-mail from an individual who stated he heard something impact in State Game Lands 211, Oct. 13.

Military officials initiated an investigation on the day they received notice.

The following afternoon, Oct. 19, range personnel found and removed the practice ordnance from the rail bed near the Lebanon/Dauphin County line in Lebanon County. The round was a Bomb Dummy Unit 33. The BDU is a 25-pound cast iron and steel non-explosive ordnance used by the Air Force and Air Guard for aerial bombardment training.

After an extensive review of flight operations, and matching information from the training round, range control personnel were able to determine that the dummy round was from a Pennsylvania Air National Guard A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft assigned to the 111th Fighter Wing, Willow Grove Naval Air Station.

"We impounded the aircraft and interviewed the pilot when we learned of this incident," said Lt. Col. Scott Hreso, chief of safety, 111th Fighter Wing. "Our initial inquiry rules out pilot error," added Hreso. Pilots are required to review and save video footage after each mission. Videotape from the Oct. 13 mission, showed normal flight operations and that correct pilot procedures were followed. Hreso described the pilot as "extremely experienced" having over 2,800 flight hours. The aircraft was part of a flight of two aircraft performing close air support training on Fort Indiantown Gap, Oct. 13. The aircraft were flying northeast at 10,000 feet on Fort Indiantown Gap when the incident occurred.

"It appears there was a problem with the release system on this A-10," said Maj. Gen. James Skiff, deputy adjutant general for Air, and former A-10 pilot. "Precision engagement is very complex and it will take time to determine what mechanical malfunction occurred," said Skiff. The round impacted roughly one mile north of its intended target.

Some 2,500 military aircraft use the Gap's air-to-ground-range annually.

Air National Guard officials continue to investigate the incident.